



For Immediate Release  
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## Colorado River District Board Votes to Oppose Referendum A

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, CO – The Board of Directors of the Colorado River Water Conservation District voted to oppose Referendum A, the controversial \$2 billion dollar water projects bonding initiative. After lengthy debate, the board voted to oppose Referendum A because the district's constituents could not be assured protection from the negative economic and water supply impacts of transmountain water diversions. Referendum A does not explicitly require that mitigation be undertaken to compensate any portion of Colorado dewatered by a project built through this proposed financing mechanism.

The Colorado River District joins West Slope legislators and the Club 20 Natural Resources Committee in their opposition to the referendum.

Referendum A would create \$2 billion worth of bonding authority, for a total of \$4 billion in state indebtedness, to build water supply projects for public and private entities. The beneficiaries of the project, or projects, financed with the bond money would be required to shoulder all of the indebtedness incurred. If the referendum passes, the Governor will have to pick at least one water project by 2005 from a list of at least two projects in different river basins proposed by the Denver-based Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB).

The Board expressed its strong support for increased water storage and its desire to take a leadership role in the creation of additional water development. However, the Board found that Referendum A was neither an appropriate nor responsible vehicle to accomplish this task. After the vote to oppose Referendum A, a second motion was passed supporting the district's active participation in the Statewide Water Supply Investigation (SWSI) to identify reasonable and prudent water storage options for providing drought protection and water for Colorado's future needs.

"It's not what I know about Referendum A; it's what I don't know about Referendum A," said board member Tom Long about the lack of clarity in the language of the referendum.

Mitigation for removing water from one basin and taking it to another is mentioned in the legislative declaration of the bill that placed this referendum on this November's general election ballot. However, mitigation appears only to be a recommendation and not guaranteed in the language of the ballot initiative.

Finding financing for new water projects is not the obstacle to obtaining new water storage.

"We're confusing the concept of financing and affordability," said Colorado River District General Manager Eric Kuhn, referring to the absence of money actually produced by the initiative. "It's not the financing (that is needed), it is how can we make some of these projects affordable. Historically, all of the big water projects that have been built were built with significant subsidies."

Unlimited bonding authority to construct water projects already exists through the Colorado Water Resources and Power Development Authority. Projects over \$500 million in cost must pass the Colorado Legislature's approval, allowing for a level of public oversight over large water projects not available through the Referendum A process. Referendum A generally duplicates this already existing water projects financing option.

The multiyear drought that culminated in last summer's extraordinary drought conditions reinforced Colorado's statewide need for additional water. The Colorado River District has been working for many years on a number of cooperative arrangements with Front Range municipalities and water providers to come up with mutually beneficial water supply projects to satisfy the needs of both sides of the Continental Divide.

The Colorado River Water Conservation District is a public agency chartered by the Colorado General Assembly in 1937 to protect and preserve the water resources of the Colorado River Basin. Fifteen West Slope counties within the Colorado River Basin make up the Colorado River Water Conservation District

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